



In Partnership with



City of Helena

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:
DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN**



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SUMMARY:

The Helena Business Improvement District (HBID) is seeking a consultant or team of consultants to assist the HBID and the City of Helena in creating a Downtown Helena Master Plan. The Master Plan will be a visioning and guiding document for the management and future growth of Downtown Helena. The planning process will be complete by March 31, 2016, if not before, with the adoption of the plan by the City Commission. Five bound copies and one electronic copy of applications are due by 5 pm April 20, 2015.

HELENA AND THE SURROUNDING AREA:

The capital city of the State of Montana, Helena is located in the central part of the State halfway between Yellowstone National Park and Glacier National Park. Downtown Helena is approximately one mile long stretching from Euclid/Lyndale to the North, to the intersection of Park Avenue and Cruse Avenue to the South and approximately Park/Benton to the West, and Cruse/Jackson to the East – roughly 40 blocks. In 2010, the US Census Bureau determined the population of Lewis and Clark County was 63,395 and the county seat, the city of Helena, 28,190 people. The Helena region is centrally located within the populous region of western Montana with a total population of 428,000 people living within 2 hours of the capital. Additional market information about Lewis and Clark County and the City of Helena is available at http://www.mbac.biz/media/CEDS_Document_2014_rev_2.pdf.

At an elevation of 4,090 feet, the City of Helena is situated among and near some of Montana's best outdoor activities. Mount Helena City Park at its peak is 5,468 feet above sea level and about 1,300 feet above the Last Chance Gulch; it has 900 acres with trails for biking, hiking, and wildlife viewing. The Missouri River flows nearby and there are several lakes within a short driving distance. Holter Lake and Hauser Reservoir outdoor recreation includes fishing, swimming, camping, water-skiing and boating. Canyon Ferry Reservoir, just 20 minutes east of Helena, is a large reservoir on the Missouri River offering outdoor recreation including ice sailing in the winter. As Lewis and Clark traveled up the Missouri River in this area, Meriwether Lewis was struck by the steep canyon walls and noted 'The Gates of the Mountains' in his journal; the Gates of the Mountains are 16 miles north of Helena off I-15.

HISTORY:

The discovery of gold in Prickly Pear Canyon in 1864 by four men looking for their last chance for a find before heading home marked the start of Helena and Downtown Helena. Helena became the "Queen City of the Rockies" with the boom brought on by the 1864 gold strike in what is now Helena's main street; the claim was staked and named "Last Chance Gulch". Situated on Last Chance Gulch, formerly Main Street, at the base of Mount Helena, Downtown quickly grew from a tent camp and miners' cabins to a thriving business, retail, fine dining, arts and entertainment district.

By 1888, an estimated 50 millionaires made Helena their home. Last Chance Gulch produced an estimated \$3.6 billion (in today's dollars) in gold over a 20-year period. The Spokane Bar Mine is one of half a dozen digging sites, and numerous old mines and settlements exist nearby.

In 1875, the territorial capital was moved from Virginia City to Helena. When Montana became a state, the fight for the location of the state capital pitted 'Copper King' Marcus Daly who supported Anaconda against rival William A. Clark who supported Helena. Helena won and in October 1898, ground was broken for the State Capitol Building.

Helena's glorious past can also be seen in the spectacular 19th-century mansions, historic Last Chance Gulch businesses, and restored pioneer dwellings in Downtown Helena and the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Overlooking Downtown, the St. Helena Cathedral is modeled after the cathedral in Cologne, Germany, and a replica of the Votive Church in Vienna. The Central School built in 1915 and expanded in 1921 sits on the district boundaries overlooking downtown. The Original Governor's Mansion constructed in 1888 contains 20 rooms all restored to turn-of-the-century elegance and furnished with antiques is four blocks from Last Chance Gulch.

In 1964, 100 years later, a group of downtown merchants gathered to create Downtown Helena Incorporated (DHI) to work with downtown businesses to attract visitors, shoppers, and customers to the over 500 businesses located Downtown. The upheaval of the 60's and 70's led to a nation-wide movement called urban renewal where communities worked to eliminate the old and create the new; In Helena, urban renewal contributed to the shaping of what Downtown Helena is today with the demolition of several historic structures and the creation of the State's only walking mall. Encompassing two blocks with a mix of architectural styles and unique businesses, the walking mall provides a pedestrian friendly park-like setting for downtown visitors and businesses to enjoy.

Downtown property owners and merchants created the Helena Downtown Business Improvement District in the late 1980's as a way to work together for the betterment of downtown. The organization was a state filed nonprofit. By 1993, as urban renewal was closing, downtown property owners approached the City to tax themselves to create a pool of funds to help with revitalization efforts. The Helena Business Improvement District was created to enhance the physical environment of the greater downtown area to improve the value of properties in the area. The BID has worked to maintain a thriving downtown and works closely with Downtown Helena Inc. to market and promote Downtown Helena. HBID is a quasi-governmental agency created by State statute through resolution of the City of Helena. After its initial creation, the BID has been renewed in 2000 and 2010; it is up for renewal in 2020.

The 1990's also marked the redevelopment of the rail yard just north of the historic part of Downtown. The Great Northern Town Center sits on the former site of the depot for the Great Northern Railroad. Infrastructure construction began in 1998 and today houses the nation's 10th Best Western Premier Hotel, an interactive museum of science and culture (ExplorationWorks), unique boutiques, galleries, salons, restaurants and some of the Northwest's top accounting, financial planning and engineering firms. The centerpiece of the Great Northern Town Center is the carousel. Completely hand-built, the carousel is one of the world's most stunning, with vibrant, hand-carved animals and adornments. Judged by the National Carousel Association as the finest new carousel in the United States, the Great Northern Town Center's carousel features animals that call Montana home: buffalos, big horn sheep, antelopes, otters, bobcats, a grizzly bears, a cutthroat trout and more.

Anchored by the Great Northern Town Center, the surrounding area has also developed with the new Federal Building and Federal Courthouse, another commercial building and the Gold LEED certified Montana State Fund building.

Today, you can still trace our history in downtown: envision the early mining days at Reeder's Alley, wonder along Last Chance Gulch to admire the late 19th century architecture and visit the many local merchants, eateries, and establishments that provide the charm of downtown, and progress to the modern era by ending in the Great Northern Town Center where contemporary Helena merges with historic Helena. Known as the most historic mile in Montana, Downtown Helena's colorful history and exciting future provide a strong foundation on which to build the Downtown Master Plan.

THE PROJECT:

Helena is the only mid-sized or larger city in Montana without a downtown master plan. Missoula, Bozeman, Billings, Great Falls, Hamilton, Kalispell, and Butte – all have downtown plans.

There is a significant amount of planning happening in the City of Helena. The City of Helena is updating zoning ordinances and design guidelines, working on long range transportation plan updates, updating storm water infrastructure, working to redevelop the Caird property to the east of Downtown, and considering a planning process that would abut Downtown to the North. The Helena Area Transit Advisory Board has undertaken a planning process to update public transportation within the City and County which effects Downtown. Helena was a recipient of a Greening America's Capital grant which suggested specific physical changes in Downtown. All of these plans impact Downtown in some manner and impact Downtown dynamics. All of these plans were created or are being created in isolation of each other.

None of these plans take a comprehensive look at a vision and implementation strategy for the long range development and growth of Downtown including:

- what are the economic opportunities and challenges for Downtown;
- what are the current and future housing needs;
- how current planning efforts impact other planning efforts;
- what is the best transportation plan for downtown circulation and connectivity to the rest of the community;
- what is needed for future growth as far as infrastructure, building heights, zoning;
- what is the vision and long range goals for the walking mall and how does that fit into the greater downtown;
- how do we protect the historic character and architecture;
- how do we connect the north half of downtown with the south half;
- how do we increase walkability and alternative modes of transportation;
- what is the best parking plan; and
- a number of other questions related to creating a comprehensive vision for the future of Downtown Helena.

There is a seemingly lack of appreciation for the economic driver that is Downtown Helena. A Downtown master plan captures the importance of downtown, shapes the vision and long range goals, and creates consensus for its future. Helena is Montana's capital city and should have a vibrant healthy downtown that is a reflection of our State. The Downtown Master Plan will help guide and direct efforts within the downtown area as well as educate developers and public agencies of the importance Downtown plays in the area's economic health.

HBID and the City of Helena seek to hire a consultant or team of consultants to carry out the development of the downtown master plan over a 9-12 month period. The consultants will work with the HBID Executive Director and Steering Committee to refine the scope of work upon hire. HBID envisions the project in three phases:

1. public visioning and outreach
2. technical plan drafting
3. final plan and adoption

A Steering Committee will be created with specific skill sets and interests to steward the planning process with the HBID Board and Executive Director. Their role will be to provide expertise and guidance particularly during the technical development of the plan itself. The Consultant will work with the Executive Director and the Steering Committee to identify and create a list of stakeholders both generally (residents, business owners, etc.) and specifically (John Smith, developer, Sue Jones, property owner, etc.)

Phase one: Public Visioning and Outreach

HBID envisions robust inclusive public input for the planning process, with potentially three public charettes. Additional surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one outreach will most likely need to be integrated into this process. The goal for phase one is to define the vision for downtown, identify what's needed and what needs to be protected to achieve that vision.

The first charrette will be a public visioning process where downtown stakeholders, residents, developers, businesses, property owners, and interested members of the public at large would gather to identify downtown's strengths, challenges, opportunities and obstacles. Participants would also envision what they would like to see their downtown look like in five, ten, and 20 years. A list of targeted stakeholders would be developed and invitations sent as well as general public outreach to ensure all downtown stakeholders are heard.

Between the first and second charrette, the information gathered from the first charrette will be transcribed into topic areas such as transportation, the walking mall, historic preservation, public art, housing, business mix, new development, etc. An assessment would also be made to ensure we had reached and heard from the identified list of stakeholders. Additional outreach would be conducted to reach those stakeholders not represented in the first charrette.

The second public charrette would potentially be comprised of stations people will move between to discuss opportunities within each category and prioritize potential items. The outreach will be to stakeholders, businesses, residents, property owners, and interested members of the public, the same as for the first charrette.

Between the second and third charrette, the information from the second charrette will be transformed into more complex options for revitalizing downtown. The third charrette will be similar to the second one but with longer sessions and fewer topic areas.

The design of these charrettes may be adjusted as part of the initial work with the consultants.

Phase two: drafting the technical plan

The steering committee will actively steward this phase of the project. Taking the information gathered in Phase One as the guiding direction, the committee and consultants will begin to draft the master plan.

Consultants will take into consideration past plans for downtown and incorporate applicable parts including the Greening of America's Capitol's report, Joe Minacozzi's economic analysis of Downtown Helena, long range transportation plans, other existing infrastructure plans, Helena Housing Needs Study, etc. Additional market analysis will need to be completed and incorporated; a full market study is desired. This would involve an analysis of existing conditions including retail, service and housing that exists in the downtown area and using that data, with existing data, to help to define targeted market segments that exist, their potential clustering and identify market segments that are underutilized or do not exist.

Consultant will also inventory existing infrastructure and historic conditions working with the City of Helena and other partners; this will be a review of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the area, including but not limited to, water, sewer, power, gas, fiber, parking, zoning and capital and logistical issues.

This phase will add strategies to accomplish the identified priorities, identify technical changes needed, steps to accomplish those changes, and create draft visual elements to accompany the strategies. This phase should also outline the timeline for completion and, if possible, outline resources needed.

Once a draft plan is completed, a fourth public charette will be held to unveil the drafted sections with visual representations and receive feedback on the draft plan. Edits and adjustments will be incorporated in the final draft. The committee may elect to hold another public charette before the plan is ready to be finalized if there is significant feedback for change; however, that will be determined after the fourth charette.

Phase three: final plan and adoption

The steering committee will work with the consultants to incorporate public feedback and any final adjustments into the final plan. The final plan will be presented to the HBID Board at a board meeting with public comment held on the plan; the consultants will present the plan to the HBID Board. If approved at the Board meeting, the plan would then be forwarded to the City/County Planning Board for adoption into the growth management plan. The plan would then be presented to the City Manager and appropriate City Commissions for adoption. Additional presentations by the Consultant will most likely be required during the adoption process. Once the City adopts, the Downtown Helena Master Plan becomes the guide for downtown revitalization.

POTENTIAL TIMELINE:

The following is a draft timeline – the timeline submitted by the consulting team should be no longer than 12 months for completion with the final document completed in January 2016.

TASK	MONTH
Refine Scope of Work and Issue RFP for Consultant	March 2015
Select Consultant and refine scope further	April 2015
Public Charettes	May-June 2015
Visioning Documents	June – July 2015
Technical Steering Committee convenes	June 2015
Draft strategies	July - September 2015
Public Charette	September 2015
Re-draft and edit plan	September - October 2015
Final document	November - December 2015
HBID Board meeting hearing and adoption	January 2016
City County Planning Board adoption process	January – February 2016
City Commission process and adoption	March 2016
COMPLETION DATE:	March 2016

BUDGET:

HBID has set a budget of \$68,000 for the completion of this plan. Consultants should submit an itemized budget proposal outlining costs for each phase of the project as well as total cost for the entire project.

This project is funded from four funding sources: The Helena Business Improvement District, Montana Main Street Program Grant, CDBG Economic Development Planning Grant, and Big Sky Trust Fund Grant. The selected consultants must be comfortable with the reporting and payment constraints of public funding and comply with all sub-recipient requirements regarding supporting documentation, compliance with laws, and payment. Selected consultants will need to show proof of professional liability insurance and not be on any public entity debarment list. Any procurement under this contract will need to follow DBE and Section 3 procedures.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

Please submit five bound copies and one electronic copy of your application to:

Tracy Reich
Helena Business Improvement District
225 Cruse Ave Ste B
Helena, MT 59601
treich@helenabid.com

Applications are due by **5 pm April 20, 2015**.

Proposals should include:

- a narrative proposal explaining your approach to downtown planning and this project
- how you would provide value to HBID's process
- your approach to gathering public and stakeholder input
- how you envision working with the HBID and City of Helena
- a timeline
- a complete cost breakdown for the project by phase and total
- list and describe two or three past projects of a similar nature
- a list of staff that will be working on the project and their qualifications
- a list of any partnering consultants, their staff working on the project and their qualifications
- a list of four references and their contact information
- Optional: additional information about your company and sample projects as supporting material

Please contact Tracy Reich if you have any questions or need additional information at treich@helenabid.com or at 406/447-1535.

SCORING AND SELECTION PROCESS:

A selection committee comprised of City of Helena Community Development Staff, Helena Business Improvement District Staff and Board members, funder representatives and potential technical committee members will grade and select 3-4 finalists to present to the selection committee.

Proposals will be graded on the following criteria:

1. Proposal content
2. Background and similar experience
3. Capacity and capability of professional firm to perform the work required, including specialized services, with the time limitations fixed for the completion of the applicable project.
4. Experience of key people, including project specific experience for each person
5. Satisfactory references
6. Demonstrated success in public outreach and support
7. Past record of performance for professional firm with respect to such factors as control of costs, quality of work, customer satisfaction, and ability to meet deadlines.
8. Appreciation and sensitivity to character and history of Downtown Helena.

The finalists will be asked to conduct a one hour presentation (including Q & A) answering the question: Why should the HBID and City of Helena hire your firm over other qualified firms to guide the Downtown Helena Master Planning Process? Finalists will be notified of the Committee's decision and of the presentation date within ten days. Work will commence as soon as a contract is finalized.

EEO AND COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS

The Helena Business Improvement District is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Hiring will be made on the basis of merit and qualifications; there will be no discrimination based upon race, color, religion, creed, political ideas, sex, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, or national origin. Selected consultants must fully comply with all applicable federal, state, or local

laws, rules, policies, regulations and ordinances including the Montana Human Rights Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

